taking a closer look at our county, demographically, economically and socially
Rural-Urban Dynamics in Kildare: Socio-economic patterns and trends

Prepared for

Kildare County Development Board

by

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April 2006
This profile is one of a series of documents produced by Kildare County Development Board as part of the process of reviewing its activities and planning for the future. In producing the profile the board examined the social, economic, cultural and recreational trends that reflect the County in which we live. A detailed analysis of this information provided the basis from which the future work of the board was planned, Kildare County Development Board Action Plan 2006-2008.

A major finding of this report has been the emergence of the urban-rural complexities that exist in County Kildare. While many of these complexities pose great opportunities for the County and strengthen the diverse environment Kildare offers, they also present a broad range of challenges that need to be addressed in a co-ordinated and integrated manner.

This document provides a basis from which the work of statutory and voluntary agencies in Kildare can be planned, and provides a solid validation for focusing our work in areas that experience disadvantage and on those who experience isolation and social exclusion. It gives us clear indicators of quality of life issues that affect citizens in Kildare and highlights the needs and gaps that exist.

Kildare County Development Board created a vision in 2002, with the launch of Kildare 2012, A Social, Cultural & Economic Strategy. This profile marks an important step in realising that vision and provides the foundation from which we can target and focus our resources on issues of most need. It is a valuable resource that can be used by all agencies on the County Development Board in planning and co-ordinating service delivery so as to ensure that Kildare becomes the first choice as a place to live, learn, work, visit and do business.

Niall Bradley
Kildare County Manager
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The production of this report has been greatly assisted by the co-operation and help of members of the County Development Board, staff in several sections of Kildare County Council as well as many of the agencies and organisations that are active in Kildare. Undoubtedly, without their assistance the assembling and analysis of the detailed information in this report would not have been possible. Thanks are also due to the Central Statistics Office for providing the Small Area Population Statistics pertaining to the 2002 Census of Population as well as fulfilling my endless requests for other data. I would like to express my gratitude also to the Ordnance Survey Ireland for allowing us to use their database of digital boundaries. Particular thanks is due to Professor Jim Walsh, NUI Maynooth who provided invaluable guidance with the writing of this report and also to Dr. Adrian Kavanagh for his contribution to the report. I am hugely grateful to both Aine Smith (NIRSA) and Dave Prendergast (Kildare County Council) who worked so hard drafting and redrafting the maps. Considerable thanks are due also to the staff of Community & Enterprise in Kildare County Council who greatly supported this work and to the current Director of Community & Enterprise, Tommy Skehan and its former Director Des Page.
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INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In 2002 Kildare County Development Board prepared a socio-economic profile of the county, using the 1996 Census data, which was used to inform the actions detailed in *Kildare 2012, a strategy for the economic, social and cultural development of the county*. The purpose of this report is to update the profile. It contains detailed mapping which illustrates patterns within the county using data from the 2002 Census of Population as well as other data sources. It further considers how Kildare has changed since the 1996 Census. The key issues that emerged while compiling this profile, have been used by the CDB in preparing their action plan for the period 2006-2008.

The county of Kildare has an area of 169,426 hectares with a population of 163,944 in 2002. It is one of the most rapidly growing counties in Ireland with a population increase of 21.4% over the 1996-2002 period compared with an 8% increase for the country as a whole. The geographical position of the county is hugely important to any analysis of recent development trends and future prospects. Although the county is part of the Greater Dublin Area, much of its boundary is shared with counties that are part of the Objective One Border Midlands West (BMW) region. Development in the north-east of the county is very much influenced by the opportunities and pressures emanating from the Dublin metropolitan area, while much of the west and south of the county is more rural and in many ways peripheral. The National Spatial Strategy is based on a more vigorous approach to achieving balanced regional development and was adopted by the government in 2002. Given that there are no Gateways or Hubs located in the county, the challenge for Kildare in the promotion of economic development is even greater than in the past.

Kildare's topography consists of a large fertile plain broken only by a few small hills such as Dunmurry Hill and the Hill of Allen with upland areas mainly on the eastern county boundary. The fertile plain forms part of the central lowlands of Ireland and extends throughout most of the county including the unique landscape of the Curragh. The uplands to the east of the county separate the plains from the Wicklow Mountains and Blessington. There are seven Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) within the county as well as 23 Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and one nature reserve. The landscape is also home to a wealth of national monuments as well as a number of significant historical sites at Maynooth, Kildare town and Celbridge.

Recent patterns of growth within the county are to a large extent influenced by both the location of key items of infrastructure as well as the settlement pattern that has developed over centuries. Three national primary roads, the M4/N4, M7/N7 and M9/N9 extend westwards and southwest from Dublin through the county to Galway and Sligo (M4), to Limerick and Cork (M7/N7) and to Waterford (M9/N9). One National Secondary road (N78) extends across the south of the county in a SW-NE direction through Athy. The Dublin-Sligo rail line extends along the north of the county with the Dublin-Cork line transversing the middle of the county and the Dublin-Waterford line extending from the Dublin-Cork line through the south west of the county.

Naas, the county town, is the principal urban centre with more than 18,000 (18,288) inhabitants. Indeed, Newbridge, Celbridge, Leixlip, Maynooth, Athy and Kildare town all have populations in excess of 5,000.
INTRODUCTION

Many of the smaller settlements north and east of Kildare town have experienced rapid growth over recent years associated with the influx of commuters from Dublin.

1.2 KILDARE IN A REGIONAL CONTEXT

1.2.1 Settlement Strategy and Planning Policy

Kildare is located in the Greater Dublin Region which includes the counties of Dublin, Wicklow, Meath and Kildare. Under the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) Dublin is the only designated Gateway in the region while Hubs are located outside the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) in keeping with the overall strategy of achieving balanced regional development.

The Regional Planning Guidelines for the GDA 2004-2016 were published in July 2004 to give effect to the NSS proposals at the regional level. All of County Kildare was designated part of the Hinterland in the Strategic Planning Guidelines 1999. However, in recognition of the fact that the growth of towns and villages within north-east Kildare is directly fuelled by proximity to Dublin, part of this area is included in the Metropolitan Area (including the towns of Celbridge, Kilcock, Leixlip and Maynooth) designation in the more recent Regional Planning Guidelines for the GDA. Most of the remainder of Kildare lies within the hinterlands as defined in the Guidelines (Map 1).

The spatial framework underpinning the Kildare County Development Board Strategy, Kildare 2012 - An Economic, Social & Cultural Strategy, was formulated taking account of the then Kildare County Development Plan, the GDA Strategic Planning Guidelines, investments under the National Development Plan (NDP) and the emerging proposals (as they were at the time of preparation of the strategy) for the National Spatial Strategy. In line with the County Development Plan, the CDB strategy recognised the potential for three corridors of development in the county: Naas-Newbridge-Kilcullen; Maynooth-Celbridge-Kilcock & Leixlip and Kildare-Monasterevin.

Kildare borders the Midlands and South-East Regions. The Midlands Region has the linked Gateway, as designated in the National Spatial Strategy, of Athlone-Mullingar-Tullamore. The future growth and development of this Gateway will obviously impact on the north-west of County Kildare. To the south of the county there are strong links with the South-East Region, and in particular with Carlow town. The development of the N9 motorway will help Kildare by better linking it with the Gateway of Waterford as well as the Hubs of Kilkenny and Wexford, in addition to the port facilities at Rosslare, Bellview and New Ross.

Naas was nominated as part of a Primary Dynamic Cluster in the Regional Planning Guidelines and is classed as a Large Growth Town Type 1 in the guidelines for the GDA, while Newbridge is classed as a Large Growth Town Type 2. Celbridge, Maynooth, Leixlip and Kilcock are all classed as Moderate Growth Towns in the GDA Regional Planning Guidelines. Naas as the county town lies at the top of the settlement hierarchy within the county but it was recognised that a polycentric approach (for example, Naas-Newbridge-Kilcullen) to urban development offered the most realistic opportunity of developing a locally based counterbalance to the Dublin metropolitan area for employment, service provision and recreational facilities. This was recognised in the action plan developed as part of the CDB strategy.
The Regional Planning Guidelines place considerable emphasis on the need to create spatial stability capable of delivering the best achievable service level and employment opportunities throughout the entire region. The primary objective is a strong strategic framework with economic and cultural synergies being created if constituent settlements play contemporary roles. The Guidelines identify two Primary Dynamic Clusters: Naas-Newbridge-Kilcullen and Maynooth-Celbridge-Kilcock & Leixlip and one Secondary Dynamic Cluster: Kildare-Monasterevin (Map 1).

1.2.2 Economic context
County Kildare occupies 2.4% of the total area of the State and contains 4.2% of the population (2002). The CSO estimate of Gross Value Added (GVA) shows that in 1995, the latest year for which estimates are available at county level, the economy of Kildare contributed 4.1% of the total GVA for the State. Compared to the other counties under the immediate influence of the Dublin metropolitan area the performance in Kildare was quite good as evidenced by a GVA per capita that was 111% of the average for the State, compared with 80% for Wicklow and only 68% for Meath. Similarly, Kildare has a per capita disposable income that is greater than the average for the State. Between 1998 and 2002 the relative position of the Kildare index improved only very slightly (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>GVA* per capita 1995</th>
<th>Disposable Income per capita 1998</th>
<th>2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>104.8</td>
<td>104.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meath</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>95.0</td>
<td>96.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wicklow</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>95.0</td>
<td>100.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>114.8</td>
<td>100.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid East</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>98.7</td>
<td>113.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Source: CSO.

1.3 REPORT OUTLINE

An understanding of the factors that influence the achievement of an integrated approach to development in all of its dimensions was instrumental in the selection and inclusion of material for this report.

Chapter 2 identifies the major characteristics of the population structure of Kildare and its distribution as well as the dominant driver of demographic change – which in the case of Kildare is large-scale in-migration. Chapter 3 concentrates on the labour force component of the population as it is a major determinant of the amount of wealth creation. The size and characteristics of the labour force varies between different parts of the county and is influenced by demographic attributes such as the age profiles and the different

* Gross Value Added, GVA, is a measure of the value of the goods and services produced in the region priced at the value which the producers received minus any taxes payable and plus any subsidies receivable as a consequence of their production or sale.
INTRODUCTION

stages of households in the family life cycle. These aspects are considered in Chapter 2 and taken up more fully in Chapter 3 which also provides an in-depth analysis of the industrial sectors in which the workforce is employed. Chapter 4 considers the distributions and structures of the major economic sectors, given that these are major influences on local levels of productivity and competitiveness.

Chapter 5 examines the social context of life in Kildare and is concerned with social indicators, including a range of social exclusion variables. The role of education is explored first and local variations in levels of educational attainment are mapped. Following this the geography of social classes within the county is illustrated. This chapter also highlights that there are many groups in society that may be at risk of exclusion, including lone parents of young families, elderly persons living alone, households without a car, asylum seekers and travellers. The geographical distribution of the groups at risk are mapped and some recent data from the Department of Social & Family Affairs as well as Kildare County Council are also presented.

Chapter 6 concentrates on the wide range of factors that contribute to the quality of life of those living in Kildare. The importance of quality of life is recognised as a key goal in development strategies. Further, variations in quality of life factors are also known to have an influence on private sector investment decisions that may contribute to development of the county. This chapter presents a detailed analysis of housing and travel to work patterns, as well as childcare provision, health, the cultural heritage, leisure and recreational facilities and the quality of the natural environment. Chapter 7 highlights the range of essential supporting infrastructures including transport, water supply, energy and telecommunications provided in the county and their recent and future developments. Chapter 8 provides a synthesis of the spatial patterns that have been examined separately throughout the rest of the report. Finally, a number of conclusions are noted and issues for the CDB to address are identified.
MAP 1: REGIONAL PLANNING GUIDELINES GREATER DUBLIN AREA:
SETTLEMENT STRATEGY 2004-2016

Kildare County Development Board
Rural-Urban Dynamics in Kildare: Socio-economic Patterns and Trends